Northeastern Area Forest Legacy Program Yearbook 2006

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Department of
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Forest Service

Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry

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April 2007

The Forest Legacy Program protects important forest lands by purchasing conservation easements or fee titles from willing landowners whose lands are threatened with conversion to nonforest uses. Forest Legacy properties offer recreational opportunities, watershed protection, timber resources, wildlife habitat, and protection from development.

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Forest Legacy Program Synopsis

Program Purpose

The purpose of the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is to protect important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses.

Program Description

The Forest Legacy Program is a partnership between participating States and the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. These two entities work together to identify important forest lands and protect them for future generations.

Conservation easements are the primary tool used to achieve this goal. Priority is given to lands that have important scenic or recreational values; riparian areas; fish and wildlife values, including threatened and endangered species; or other ecological values.

Program Characteristics

- The Forest Legacy Program is entirely voluntary. It operates only in States that have elected to join the program.
- The program helps States and regions identify important forest areas. Lands targeted for protection must fall within designated Forest Legacy Areas.
- State and local partners select priority tracts in cooperation with the Forest Service.
- The program is based on a "willing seller and willing buyer" concept.
- When conservation easements are used, the land remains privately owned.
- Other protection tools include full-fee purchase, voluntary deed restrictions, covenants, and agreements.
- The interests in land may be held by the Federal government, or by the State or a unit of local government if the State chooses to select the State Grant Option as authorized by the 1996 Farm Bill.
- When the Federal government holds the easement, State or local units of government agree to administer the lands or interests in lands.
- The lands and interests are held in perpetuity. There is no loss of the Federal investment resulting from change of ownership.
- Forest Stewardship Plans that meet the landowner's objectives for natural resource management are prepared on all privately owned tracts.
- The tracts acquired can remain "working forests" and can forever provide forest resources to meet the needs of the local community and the Nation.

Forest Legacy Program of the Northeastern Area

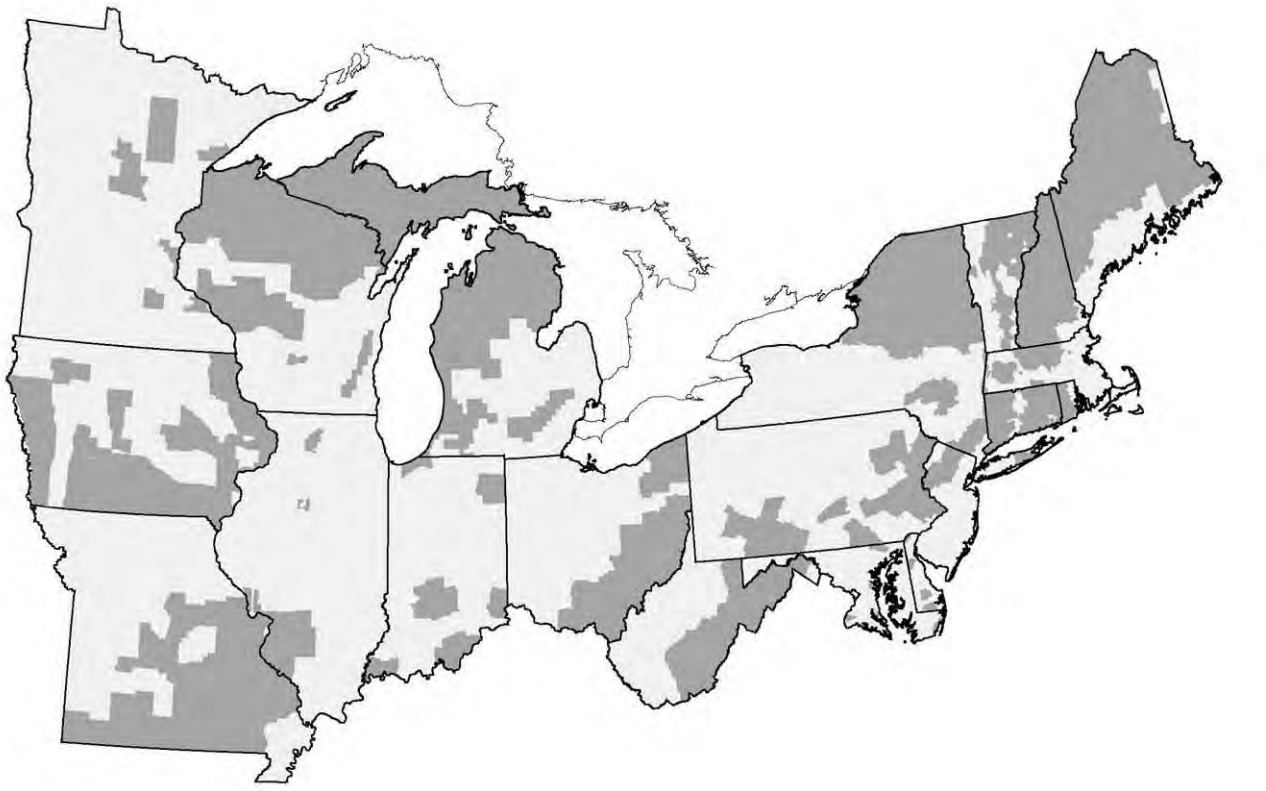
This report outlines program activity and accomplishments in the 20 States served by the Northeastern Area (NA), a unit of the State and Private Forestry branch of the Forest Service, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 (October 1, 2005–September 30, 2006).

- All 20 States served by the Northeastern Area have voluntarily joined the Forest Legacy Program.

- In FY 2006, accomplishments occurred in 12 of the States served by the Northeastern Area, where a total of 259,395 acres was protected from conversion to nonforest uses. The Northeastern Area's cumulative FLP accomplishments total 990,790 acres on 217 tracts through September 30, 2006. The total Federal investment of $133,498,000 in the States served by the Northeastern Area has protected forests valued at $266,524,000 through conservation easements and fee acquisitions since 1993.

- The national appropriations for the Forest Legacy Program and the Northeastern Area's share over the past 5 years are as follows:

Year	National FLP	NA FLP Share
2002	$65,000,000	$30,444,000
2003	$68,380,000	$30,055,000
2004	$64,134,000	$29,764,000
2005	$57,134,000	$26,174,000
2006	$56,538,000	$27,210,000



Properties considered for inclusion in the Forest Legacy Program must be located within a State's designated Forest Legacy Area (dark shaded areas on map).

Partner Roles

The Federal Role

The significance of the public benefits of a particular forest ranges from local to national. Larger forests tend to be nationally significant because the values they provide are becoming rarer. Extensive forest areas are often subject to the additional challenge of multiple ownerships and numerous political jurisdictions. Through the Forest Legacy Program, the Federal government helps State and local governments look beyond their political boundaries to identify important forest areas. The Federal government provides oversight, and financial and technical assistance to help protect important forests.

The State Role

States integrate partner resources to cooperatively protect and maintain a forest land base. The lead agency, usually the State forestry agency, carries out the FLP in the State. Responsibilities include the following:

- Collecting information to identify and delineate important forest areas that may be selected as Forest Legacy Areas.
- Consulting with the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee to achieve program purposes.
- Addressing land protection and forest management issues.
- Conducting land acquisition activities.
- Integrating policies and incentives to conserve a forest land base.
- Holding and administering the lands or interests in land that enter the FLP.
- Monitoring tracts for program compliance.

The State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee Role

The State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee's role is identified in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act. The committee's consulting and recommending duties for the Forest Legacy Program are identified in the act and the FLP guidelines, and include the following:

- Establishing eligibility criteria and recommending Forest Legacy Areas in the Assessment of Need process.
- Prioritizing lands for inclusion in the FLP.
- Advising the State lead agency in order to achieve Forest Legacy Program objectives.

The Nongovernmental Organization (Land Trust) Role

Nongovernmental organizations, specifically land trusts or similar organizations, have a distinct relationship with the FLP. Because of their compatible interest in protecting land for conservation purposes, land trusts can be a primary contact with landowners to negotiate the purchase of conservation easements and to monitor the conservation easements once they are enrolled in the FLP. Lands acquired by or donated to land trusts may be counted toward the non-Federal cost-share amount of total program costs, provided the interests in lands contribute to the goals of the Forest Legacy Program and the lands are located within a Forest Legacy Area.

The Landowner Role

Landowner participation in the FLP is voluntary. A landowner joins the program either by conveying interests in lands to achieve the conservation objectives of the FLP or by purchasing or inheriting land that has already been committed to an FLP conservation easement. The landowner becomes a primary practitioner in maintaining the forest land base by implementing management activities guided by a Forest Stewardship Plan to conserve the values for which the land entered the program.

Federal, State, local, and nonprofit partners are all critical to ensuring the successful completion of Forest Legacy projects.